POTATOES (IRELAND).

COPY of REPORT of Dr. *Playfair* and Mr. *Lindley* on the present State of the IRISH POTATO CROP, and on the Prospect of approaching Scarcity.—(Dated 15th November 1845.)

Whitehall,
4 February 1846.

PRESENTED TO PARLIAMENT BY HER MAJESTY'S COMMAND.

Sir, London, 15 November 1845.

WITH reference to the conversation we had the honour to hold with yon yesterday at the Home Office, and your wish that our individual opinions as to the extent of the Potato Disease should he communicated in writing, we have to make the following statement.

During our atay in Ireland, we completely examined snch official papera as were transmitted to us from the Castle; we consulted persons acqnainted with the facts of the disease; we visited the district lying between Duhlin and Drogheda, and inspected various Potato-fields and stores in the counties of Duhlin, Louth, Meath, Westmeath and part of Kildare. Judging from the evidence thns collected, and from what we have seen of the progress of the disease in England, we can come to no other conclusion than that one-half of the actual Potato crop of Ireland is either destroyed or remains in a state unfit for the food of man. We moreover feel it our duty to apprize you, that we fear this to be a low estimate.

It is donhtless true that in some places a mnch larger proportion of the erop is apparently safe; but, on the other hand, there are districts where it is not too mnch to say that the crop is lost: for example, we may mention a large field at Skerries, where not more than one Potato in twenty was found lying in a state which would admit of preservation; and another, near Oldhridge, in which, from the want of skill in the owner, all appeared to be perishing in the pits; and we have proof that these are not rare examples.

We would now add, melancholy as this picture is, that in all prohshility the late rainy weather has rendered the mischief yet greater.

Of the remaining half thns assnmed to he capahle of preservation, there can be no doubt that the principal part may be relied npon as food for the ensuing winter, provided the methods of storing which we have indicated are followed. Bnt, considering the means, or rather the want of means, on the part of the Irish peasant, the wetness of the climate, the disptes between landlord and tenant, and perhaps the despair or other feelings of the poor cultivators, we dare not venture to hope that our plans, simple as they are, will be fully carried out; and in the meanwhile more of the crop will disappear.

It is also necessary to direct your attention to the qnantity of Seed Potatoes which must be reserved for the coming year, if the cultivation of this plant is to be persevered in. We can state that, on an average, one-eighth of a crop is required for planting the same qnantity of ground; so that in fact only three-eighths of the crop can, in our view, be at this moment assumed to be availahle as food.

There is an opinion that, npon the whole, the Potato crop is this year a very large one. We regret that we have been unahle to ohtain any proof of this. On the contrary, we have seen that the crop was small; and we have it in evidence that it is below the average; hnt we have also seen it to be heavy, and we therefore consider that it may, perhaps, be an average crop.

We are not sufficiently acquainted with the hahits of the Irish peasantry to be able to state at what time tha want of food from the failure of their Potatoes may be first expected.

We have the honour, &c.

John Lindley.
Lyon Playfair.

Right Hon. Sir James Graham,
&c. &c. &c.

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Ordered, by The House of Commons, *to be Printed,*
4 *February* 1846.

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